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University of Dayton

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Wednesday December 17, 2014

Communication Program Earns National Awards

National Communication Association recognizes Basic Course Program and professor as tops in country.

The University of Dayton's communication department received two national awards for its innovation in education.

The National Communication Association's Basic Course Division awarded its Program of Excellence Award to CMM 100, the basic communication course required of all University of Dayton students.

Samuel Wallace, associate professor and director of undergraduate studies at the University of Dayton, received the NCA Basic Course Division Distinguished Faculty Award for his lifetime achievements in promoting and enhancing the basic course at a national level.

"The department of communication has wholly reimagined the basic course, going beyond typical confines to create a course that better advances integrated, liberal learning throughout the curriculum," said Paul Benson, interim provost. "The program is one of the best exemplars of academic quality, integrated learning, and creativity in our innovative new curriculum at UD."

CMM 100 takes as its foundation that communication is a two-way process; the listening party needs to understand what the speaker is saying, said Joe Valenzano III, assistant professor and basic course director. Valenzano also received the Program of Excellence Award in 2009 while at University of Nevada Las Vegas. He is the only director who has received the award twice.

"Our students talk about challenging topics in a way that fosters understanding rather than aggressive argument. We're teaching people to disagree without being disagreeable," he said.

The topics are always current and have ranged from student loan forgiveness, campus climate for minority groups, legalization of marijuana, and government seizure of land.

"There is no other program like it in the country, but we hope others will pick up the model and run with it," Valenzano said.

The Distinguished Faculty Award is presented to people who serve as "exceptional" role models, have at least 15 years of experience, and have served at least five of those years as a chair or basic course director. One of the inaugural recipients of the award in 2013 was University of Dayton professor and former basic course director Don Yoder, who died in April.

Wallace is a past chair of the NCA's Basic Course Division and former president of the Ohio Communication Association and has authored, co-authored and co-edited several books, and written articles in national and state journals and convention papers.

He has served on the editorial boards of *The Ohio Speech Journal*, *The Basic Communication Course*

Annual, and *Communication Teacher*. His research interests include communication pedagogy, innovation in the classroom, sustainable course development, and assessment. He has taught at the University of Dayton since 1982.

"You'd be hard-pressed to find someone in this country who is involved with the basic course that has not been affected by Sam," Valenzano said. "He helped create the only journal dedicated to the basic course. He helped create divisions devoted to basic course administration. He's written textbooks using innovative pedagogy. The list goes on."

"Not only do his advisees admire him, but on numerous occasions, I have had his students come to me and rave about Sam," said Heather Parsons, communication department director of advising. "He is an inspiration to anyone who meets him."

The Basic Course Division of the National Communication Association has been recognizing top basic communication courses in the country since 2007. The award is designed to recognize outstanding basic communication courses that can serve as models of best practice for other institutions. The division confers only one Program of Excellence per year.

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